1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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and "tame" Veddas, and to come to more recent times, there is evidence that a hundred years ago there were organized communities of house-building Veddas, while certain Veddas received grants of land from the Sinhalese kings, and on these lived as definite village communities until quite recently, probably till within the last half century.

Village Veddas of Uva Bintenne.

Dambani. The present community of Dambani, in the jungle between Kallodi and Alutnuwara, may serve as an example of a village Vedda community. Some twenty families living in tolerably built houses keep buffaloes and cultivate chena, the latter being big enough not only to supply their own wants, but to permit of a lively trade with Sinhalese traders. These Dambani folk have been known to the Arachi of Belligala as a flourishing community in the same social condition for the last thirty years, and he states that they were in this condition in his father's time. A short visit was sufficient to show that here was a community which, though it had lost many Vedda beliefs, still retained others, and was so strong and independent that there was little likelihood of its immediate fusion with the surrounding population. Physically these people (Plate XV, figure 2), though somewhat darker and often of a stouter build than the Danigala Veddas, could not be mistaken for Sinhalese. The Dambani people are unfortunately "show" Veddas, that is to say, people who have been sent for so often by white visitors that they have learnt certain tricks, which they show off directly they see a European, and so constantly demand presents that serious work with them is an impossibility.

A positive advantage which has, however, arisen from this condition, is that these folk have kept up the remains of the so-called Vedda language. The headman in whose district these Veddas are situated is largely responsible for this, for he always speaks to them in their own dialect in harsh tones. He is an extremely kind old man, and answers definite questions perfectly truthfully, yet like so many Sinhalese, he generally says only what he thinks is expected of him, hence, the belief in the fierce sullen ways of the Veddas and their inability to laugh has been

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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622 unconsciously fostered by him. A brief account of our visit to
156 Dambani will best show the present condition of these people.

While in the jungle we were suddenly met by four Veddas,
177 who greeted the Arachi in a deep and apparently fierce tone, he
576 returning the greeting in the same manner. To our surprise these men came up to one of us (C. G. S.), shook hands, and then turned and led us to their village, on the way to which we passed a couple of "tame" buffalo that tried to charge
[361] us. There were three huts in the village and the headman's wife—not at all shy or diffident—after shaking hands took one of us (B. Z. S.) by the arm and led her into a hut. This
[342] had a good roof and walls of sticks, only one side being closed by bark slats, it was full of pumpkins and other chena
126 produce, which were however soon removed. We then sat down to take vocabularies, as the talk going on around us sounded quite different from Sinhalese and they professed not to understand our interpreter who was unable to follow them. So we
574 spoke through the Arachi. The headman's wife brought us each
609 some honey and yams and commanded us to eat. We sucked
43) the honey comb, but that did not satisfy her and she tried to feed one of us (B. Z. S.) with yams herself and to pour water down her throat. After giving us a few Vedda words, the Vidane (headman) began to talk very angrily and then stalked out of the hut. He complained that we had not given him presents and refused to speak another word until we gave him something. Other men came into the village making a total of about 10 or 11 grown men and some boys, but only two middle-aged women, the wife of the Vidane and another, so it was evident that there were other huts in the neighbourhood. We told the Vidane that our carriers would bring presents and made him and a few other men come back to the hut. But after every two or three words there were more angry protests and our interpreter explained that "other white men had not treated them so." When they raised their voices their talk sounded fierce, every word being shouted with emphasis and accompanied by scowling looks. Then we found out from the Arachi that these like the Danigala Veddas were "show Veddas" who had been utterly spoilt by presents from "distinguished visitors," some of whom

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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them was their unhuman apathy and utter lack of interest.... Although we came upon them unexpectedly, and although, as they told us later, they had never before seen white people, nevertheless, neither of them showed the slightest astonishment or interest in our appearance; both glanced up for a second, and then cast down their eyes, and continued silently shelling the seeds of the lotus pods beside them, and stirring the simmering pot over the fire. Near the other huts, women and children were occupied at the same task; some were sitting on the ground around a pile of lotus pods, others were attending to the cooking. At first the children seemed a little frightened at us, but contrary to expectation, did not rush off to the jungle....

"At the time of our visit there were but three men and seventeen women and children in Makulugulla; these were distributed in five shelters or huts. The chief's house was made of four upright posts and a flat thatched roof of palm leaves, but without walls or flooring. The other huts were shaped like A-tents, one was thatched with coarse grass, the other covered with large circular leaves of the lotus. The remaining two huts were shaped like wall tents, the roofs of grass or palm-leaf thatch, and the walls of bark. They all had dirt floors, and not one of them was over eight feet square. In three of the huts the utensils, such as earthen pots, baskets, gourds and mats, were piled on the ground at one end; in only two were there any shelves. The floor of each, however, was neatly swept, and even outside the huts, where all but the aged and the very young slept, the ground had been swept clear of leaves and twigs.

"The cooking was all done out of doors, at a fire-place consisting of three stones; and the cook was honoured by having a seat, either a block of wood or the dried skin of the Axis deer or the Muntjac. We were also surprised to see their providence, in that they had quite a good-sized bundle of dry firewood on store in the huts. We expected to find the village reeking with refuse and decaying game, of which we heard that they were fond, but the place was free from smells, and really clean. The jungle at this spot was composed of large trees and

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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such favourite names as Kaira, Poromala and Handuna leads to confusion, not only in the minds of strangers, but also we believe in the minds of the Veddas themselves.

Sinhalese who come in contact with the Veddas find the same difficulty, and the individuals of certain communities, e.g. Danigala, have each a Sinhalese name by which they are known to the peasant Sinhalese, and which in many instances they themselves recognise, so that some Veddas actually know each other by these Sinhalese names, and give them when asked their own names or those of their companions. This is the explanation of the majority of Sinhalese names occurring in the genealogies. Again, the fact that among the Veddas there is no system of hereditary chieftainship, or any other custom such as the vendetta, forcing a man to know and remember his grandfathers, cannot but have assisted to bring about the forgetfulness of previous generations, which with the rarest exceptions makes everyone entirely ignorant of his grandparents. In the case of the Danigala and Henebedda Veddas there was an additional difficulty to be met in conducting our investigations. The men of these communities who for the most part belonged to the Morane and Unapane clans, traditionally the proudest and most important of the Vedda *waruge*, had to a certain extent intermarried with Sinhalese and also with the Veddas of Namadewa clan, a *waruge* which in this part of the country is regarded as of inferior status. They are most anxious to conceal instances of both these classes of marriage and lied freely concerning them and this is the reason for certain lacunae in their genealogies, which in the case of the Danigala community could not have been given at all had not Mr Bibile's position as Ratemahatmaya, i.e. hereditary overlord or "laird" of this part of the country, enabled him to make inquiries from the surrounding peasantry, and thus check, and in many instances correct, the information we obtained from the Veddas themselves.

A Vedda community consists of from one to five families who share the rights of hunting over a tract of land, of gathering honey upon it, fishing its streams, and using the rock shelters. But the whole of the community does not commonly move about its territory as one band, it is far more common to find only the

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

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"Their homes, the shelter of the trees." (Page 9)

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Naida and his family. (Page 9)

[facing p. 9]

5; Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

Vela was an interesting little chap and, unlike the others, had always something to say for himself. He entertained us with charms, pleasing lullabies, and songs of rock and stream demons that came as fast as *na* leaves shaken by the wind, in the guise of bears, their mouths adrip with human blood. These he sang despite warnings from the others who reminded him that he had sucked a chicken bone, which was a dangerous thing to do before invoking devils, lest it invite their anger.

Coming to a pool, brown with decaying leaves, we asked if the water was good. "Very good," said a Vedda, adding the epicurean touch, "Those fallen flowers floating there make the water sweet; they are the flowers that give good honey."

It was high noon when Veddas left us to go in search of food. But Vela lingered to tell us of the oppression of the local headman. Did they but catch a young deer or pea-chick that came their way they were prosecuted. The visiting apothecary too was bad; he gave them no medicines except for gifts of honey or meat; and the poor fellows had little enough for themselves.

Having visited a cave containing the battered remains of an old Buddha, we continued our circuit of the rock; and after a walk of an hour and a half under a burning sky, came to the Veddas of the *Kudda Ulpotha*. These had no huts of any sort, but merely sat grouped in families under various trees. It was the season of the *kong* fruit, of which there was plenty about. Women were boiling down the luscious pulp with which to make cakes, or extracting from the seeds an oil said to be good for sores and wounds. Very fond of the fruit they all were; it had been their only sustenance for days. One little urchin, his mouth be-ringed with parangi ulcers, was licking clean a coconut shell containing the acrid juice, with a relish worthy of a tastier dish.

The patriarch of the settlement, Naida, and his wife were typical Veddas; but here again most of the others showed Tamil admixture. One man had a large scar across his face. The manner he came by it illustrates well the aggressiveness of the little Ceylon sloth-bear. When out collecting honey he saw a she-bear and her cub. Realizing the certain disaster of such an encounter he cautiously climbed a tree; but in doing so snapped a twig and gave himself away. With a series of blood-curdling cries she charged him, and clambering up the tree, bit and clawed him severely. A large flap was torn from his face. This his father sewed up with a thorn and fibre, and doctored with a result that might have done credit to any surgeon. Living as they invariably do in the neighbourhood of rocks, and having kindred tastes in honey, yams, and fruit, the Veddas and bears often encounter each other, as the ugly scars on many of the men testify.

As, footsore and tired, we rounded the southern end of the rock towards evening, we met parties of Veddas returning with basketfuls of *kong* fruit. One youth was up a tree making the jungle ring to his song as he beat down the berries. As it darkened we reached Manampitiya, but not before we had worried a blind old owl that had descended to a streamlet to quench its thirst.

It is hard to forget that first experience of the Veddas in their homes: those voices in the jungle, that sight of their huts among the trees, and of their women roasting dainty little flowers for food.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1946 AX5 Vedda AX5

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The best of the Hennebeddè Veddas.—Poromola and Handuna (Page 16)

Handuna stringa his bow (Page 16)

[FACING P. 16]

2. FOREST CHILDREN

621 THE village of Potuliyadda lies in the heart of the country of the Henebedde Veddas. We had hoped to take these people unawares in their homes some three miles away; but it was not to be; for a Vedda boy who had witnessed our arrival had forestalled us.

We were at lunch, when my friend, whose seat commanded a view of the jungle, quietly remarked, "Hullo; who are these? Veddas without a doubt."

142 157 [411] [622] Five men, armed with bows, arrows and axes, strode in single file under the leadership of a small one-eyed man, half of whose face was covered by an awful scar which puckered an eyeless socket, giving a touch of pathos to an otherwise harsh expression. Such was Poromola, chief of the Henebedde Veddas also called *Walaha* (bear) for obvious reasons. Then there was Handuna a fine type of wild man; though close on fifty his figure was well-knit, and this combined with his goatee beard and tousy head gave a strength and rugged dignity to his bearing. There were also a tall bearded man of forty, loquacious and sophisticated enough when you knew him; a lanky, slouching, beady-eyed fellow; a robust, curly-haired bumpkin; and lastly, the snub-nosed little mischief-maker to whom we owed the honour of this visit.

123 As the Veddas came up to us, they uttered some fierce jargon we did not understand. It was pretty obvious they were acting; and not caring to encourage them in this, I casually motioned them away. They retired mumbling. We recalled them later to find them in dudgeon, evidently not being used to such treatment. They stared mutely at us affecting not to understand a word of the Sinhalese in which I addressed them. I tried again and again, but not by the flicker of an eyelid did they signify comprehension. Civility and persuasion having failed, I tried the effect of candour, telling them that we were not gullible strangers and knew all about them. This also was without effect.

Opening Seligmann's book, which contained the portraits of these very Veddas taken ten years previously, we suited picture to prototype. They gazed uncritically with stolid intentness showing no surprise or enthusiasm. I asked them whether they remembered the author and his wife who had spent so much time with them and been so kind to them. One nodded, and the others' faces betrayed interest. Thus was the first barrier carried.

Gradually we won them over one by one; but despite our best efforts the conversation flagged. And we, tired of making all the advances simulated an indifference we far from felt, and took to our books.

"We are hungry," said Handuna after a while. "Will you not give us food?"

We could only offer them money, an almost useless thing to the Vedda. We had made the serious mistake of coming unprovided with a surplus of rice, betel, arecanut and tobacco; for the surest way to the heart of the Vedda is through his stomach. We